

Patterns of Paragraph Development

Introduction - Have you ever been asked to write a 3-5 page paper and discovered that you had enough ideas to only fill a page? In such a situation, many students ask if they can use a larger font and increase their margins or they end up padding their compositions with irrelevant information, excessive quotes, and repetition. How can these obvious dodges be avoided? How do you logically develop your body paragraphs?

How to develop a paragraph- Kirsznner and Mandell in the *Brief Holt Handbook, second edition* have some suggestions. Depending upon the subject of your paragraph, some of these techniques will work better than others.

Develop your paragraph using narrative – In other words, tell a story. This sort of paragraph requires chronological ordering. Using transitional words and phrases that signal time are highly recommended.

Develop your paragraph using description - In this paragraph, you convey how something sounds, smells, tastes, feels, and/or looks. Using transitional words and phrases that indicate location are often recommended.

Develop your paragraph using exemplification - In other words, this paragraph uses specific illustrations to clarify a general statement. Using transitional words and phrases that signal examples are recommended.

Develop your paragraph using process - A paragraph using process describes how something works, presented by a series of steps in a strict chronological order. Using transitional words and phrases that signal time are highly recommended.

Develop your paragraph using cause and effect - When you use this technique, you are exploring why events occur and what happens as a result of them. Transitional words and phrases that signal causes and effects are suggested.

Develop your paragraph using comparison and contrast - A paragraph that demonstrates comparison and/or contrast examines how given subjects are either similar or different. Comparison examines how the subjects are the same. Contrast examines how the subjects are different. Using transitional words and phrases that signal comparison and contrast are highly recommended.

Develop your paragraph using division and classification - When you use the division strategy, you are discussing a single item and breaking it down into its components. Whereas, when you use the classification technique, you are taking many separate items and grouping them into categories according to qualities and characteristics that they all share.

Develop your paragraph using definition - A paragraph demonstrating this technique will include a definition of the term, the class to which it belongs, and the details that differentiate it from other members of its class.

Kirszner and Mandell *The Brief Holt Handbook, second edition, pages 48-49:*
University Center for Learning Assistance
Illinois State University

Add to these patterns:

Develop your paragraph using problem and solution—A paragraph developed in this pattern opens with a topic sentence that states a problem or asks a question about a problem; then it offers a solution or answers a question.

Develop your paragraph using an analogy (comparisons that explain an unfamiliar thing in terms of a familiar one) can also help. A writer can use an unlikely analogy such as one between the human genome and Thanksgiving dinner.

Develop your paragraph with reiteration where the writer states the main point of the paragraph and then restates it, hammering home the point and building intensity. Martin Luther King, JR. was a master of this

Patterns of Development can be combined in one paragraph